

# A Recommended Approach for Developing a School Improvement Plan

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The following approach to development of a school improvement plan is systematic, data-driven, and research-based. You are not required to use the USOE approach or template for developing your school improvement plan; however, all the necessary components that are required by NCLB are included in this approach and template. If you choose to use your own template, refer to the checklist to ensure all required components are included. Make sure the plan addresses teacher mentoring, an adequate research base, parent involvement, the 10% requirement for professional development, and a signature page indicating the involvement of a wide representation of interested parties.

## **Part A: Convene a Planning Committee**

The committee must include the principal, at least one faculty member, one parent (who is not a member of the school staff), and one representative from the LEA (who may be the Title I director). These are minimum requirements. Be sure to include enough members in the committee to represent all interested parties. All members must sign in Part A.

## **Part B: Conduct an Appraisal**

In addition to AYP data analysis, you may use other assessment data, survey results, demographic information, and evaluations of existing programs. Do not rely on CRT data alone to determine the possible causes of school improvement needs. Look for root causes that may be limiting certain groups of students.

While considering possible areas in need of improvement, review school practices in the areas that have been proven to impact student achievement in varying degrees. The following questions may be helpful in focusing your discussions.

### **1. Curriculum**

- *Does the school have an enacted curriculum that is aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum?*
- *Does the enacted curriculum provide access to the Utah State Core Curriculum for all students?*
- *Do grade levels and departments collaborate to reach common curricular goals (horizontal articulation)?*
- *Is there effective curricular coordination and articulation among all grade levels within the school, as well as with other schools in the district (vertical articulation)?*
- *Do educators communicate curriculum expectations to all stakeholders?*

### **2. Teaching and Learning**

- *Does the enacted curriculum emphasize the development of critical thinking and decision-making skills?*

- *Does the enacted curriculum emphasize the development of communication and collaboration skills?*
- *Do teachers demonstrate strong content knowledge, and are they NCLB highly qualified to teach the subject matter?*
- *Do teachers use culturally responsive instructional strategies?*
- *Do educators and para-educators collaborate with a focus on the Utah State Core Curriculum, instruction, and assessment for improved student achievement?*
- *Are effective, varied, and differentiated research-based instructional strategies and materials used to meet the needs of all students?*
- *Do teachers manage classroom behavior so that students are actively engaged in learning?*
- *Do teachers provide students with additional instruction and intervention as needed?*
- *Do teachers and students use technology effectively in classroom activities and instruction?*
- *Do teachers use instructional strategies that facilitate the transfer of knowledge?*

### **3. Assessment**

- *Do teachers utilize classroom assessments of student learning that are ongoing, rigorous, and aligned with core content?*
- *Do teachers analyze formative and summative evaluation data to plan for continuous improvement for each student, each subgroup of students, and the school as a whole?*
- *Do educators and staff systematically analyze assessment data to determine the effectiveness of programs and materials?*
- *Are performance standards clearly communicated, evident in classrooms, and observable in student work?*
- *Do teachers give ongoing, specific, and constructive feedback to students?*
- *Do teachers use common assessments to evaluate student learning and inform instruction?*

### **4. Professional Development**

- *Does the professional development provided for school administrators, teachers, and staff have a direct connection to student achievement data?*
- *Does the professional development provided help teachers, administrators, and staff acquire deeper knowledge of curriculum content?*
- *Does the professional development provided help educators and staff acquire greater knowledge of effective, research-based, content-specific pedagogy?*
- *Are adequate resources for professional development provided?*
- *Is professional development provided based on teacher need?*

### **5. Leadership**

- *Do school leaders incorporate data systematically into the school improvement plan and translate the information into concrete action steps?*

- *Do school leaders effectively manage and organize the school to improve student achievement?*
- *Do school leaders allocate resources and tools necessary for school improvement and increased student achievement?*
- *Do school leaders systematically monitor the effectiveness of teachers and instructional programs?*
- *Do the school leaders strategically communicate information regarding school improvement and student achievement to appropriate stakeholder groups?*

## **6. Parent and Community Involvement**

- *Do educators and staff communicate effectively with families about individual student progress toward achievement of Core Curriculum standards?*
- *Do educators and staff engage parents as partners in their children's education and encourage their participation in school programs by actively removing any barriers to their involvement?*
- *Are all stakeholders active partners in decision making, and do they participate in school-wide improvement?*
- *Do educators and staff actively seek partnerships with local community businesses, organizations, and institutions of higher education to impact student achievement?*

## **7. School Climate and Culture**

- *Does the instructional organization of the school and the classroom support the achievement of all students and disaggregated student groups?*
- *Is student achievement highly valued and publicly celebrated?*
- *Do the staff, students, and school community share a set of goals and practices aligned with a common vision for the purpose of fostering academic achievement for all students and disaggregated student groups?*
- *Do the school rules, practices, and activities foster a sense of community and belonging?*

Answering these questions for yourselves by using supporting data may help you identify school needs and begin to think about possible goals and activities that can improve your school.

Attach documents that support your assessment of school needs.

## **Part C: Choose Goals and Activities**

**Step 1:** After completing the needs assessment, the committee may have identified concerns in areas that hinder student achievement. These concerns should lead to the setting of a few goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based (SMART). These goals must be targeted toward specific improvements in the content areas and for the sub-groups in which the school was identified for improvement.

Please write your goals in statements that describe desired results or changes expected by a specific point in time. Remember, you are writing a two-year plan, so give your school time to complete its goals.

Step 2: For each goal, determine activities or strategies that are most likely to help the school meet its improvement goals. In selecting activities, the committee should consider:

- The direct relationship between the activities, the goals, and the desired outcomes.
- The research supporting the effectiveness of chosen activities.
- The likelihood that chosen activities will be effective in your school for your population and needs.
- Professional development that will be needed to support the activities and goals.

When describing each activity, you must describe the research base, the intended impact, the required professional development, those responsible, and the evaluation process. You will also want to consider your budget, which will be included in Part F.

Use the following logic model to guide your planning.

### **Logic Model for School Improvement Goals and Activities Form (Complete one for each goal.)**

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**School Improvement Goal: Goals must be directly related to the reasons your school did not make adequate yearly progress and directly tied to the Utah State Core Curriculum. Goals must be specific, annual, and measurable (Sec. 1116(b)(3)(A)(v)).**

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Activities

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Scientifically Based Research  
Support  
(Sec.1116(b)(3)(A)(i))

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Expected Impact in Core Academic  
Areas (Sec.1116(b)(3)(A)(i))

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Professional Development to  
Support Activities (If Necessary)  
(Sec.1116(b)(3)(A)(iii and iv))

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Timeline  
(Sec.1116(b)(3)(A))

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Responsible Parties  
(Sec.1116(b)(3)(A)(vii))

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Evaluation Process

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## **Part D: Design Your Professional Development in More Detail**

Professional development is a required part of each school improvement plan. You must spend at least 10% of your Title I budget on professional development. This professional development must be aligned with your chosen goals. It should be based on scientific research and proven to have an impact on student achievement. Professional development should be offered to paraprofessionals as well as professionals to ensure consistency in knowledge and practice among all instructional staff.

The professional development plan must include a mentoring component. The mentoring component may be provided by experienced educators, core-content coaches, or Title I staff. The mentoring component must be clear in your plan.

Professional development must target provision of services to all students by highly qualified teachers. Indicate how your school will comply with this aspect of the law.

## **Part E: Include Parents in Your Plan**

Parents are an integral part of the success of every child. Title I requires each school to include parents in the education of their children in multiple ways.

You must inform parents of your school's improvement status. This communication must be clear, include consequences of the designation such as choice and supplemental services, and be in a language and format easily accessible to parents. Please attach copies of these communications to your plan.

Parents should also be involved directly in the education of their children. You should consider the involvement of parents, especially parents of low-achieving students, when making your plan. Parents can be involved in decision-making processes (such as your planning committee), as volunteers within the school day, and as support for individual children at home. The school can support parents through parenting programs and adult education. Your plans to provide or enhance these services must be described in your plan.

## **Part F: Examine Your Budget**

Your school improvement budget must reflect a commitment to the activities you are adopting to improve student achievement. They must be targeted toward the specific reasons the school did not make adequate yearly progress. Funds must be used to supplement, not supplant, the regular school program. An amount equal to 10% of your school-wide Title IA allocation must be spent on professional development. Review your NCLB budget and revise it if necessary. Attach your school improvement budget request using the Utah State Office of Education, Application for Financial Assistance available online at:

<http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/nclb/documents/xls/NCLBbudgtemp.xls>.

## Part G: Write an Abstract

When the school improvement plan is completed, write an abstract of the plan that includes the elements listed below. Please keep the following in mind while writing.

- Abstracts are an overview of the improvement plan.
- Abstracts present key elements clearly and concisely.
- Abstracts do not include data graphs or tables, nor references.
- Abstracts should be clear and easy to read, with enough detail to help the reader understand the focus of the plan.
- Sentences should flow logically.
- The abstract should be written with correct English-language grammar and spelling.
- Limit the abstract to three paragraphs or one page.

Elements:

- Describe the context of the school.
- Explain the areas in which the school did not make adequate yearly progress in the current year, resulting in the designation as a school in need of improvement.
- Summarize the goals and activities proposed in this plan to make improvements in the areas in which the school was identified.

## Submit Your Plan to Your School District

The local school district must approve the plan before it is sent to the USOE with your request for Title I funding. Follow your district processes for this step. The superintendent, principal, and district Title I director must sign before submission. All plans, including those that do not use the template, must include this cover page.

Your plan must be presented to your local school board. The board does not need to approve the plan. This presentation will provide public information about a school's improvement status and can be used to elicit school board support for improvement efforts. Plans should be sent electronically to either Mary-Ann Simon or Ann G. White. A hard copy of the plan with the signature required should also be mailed to the team.

## Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is available from the USOE through the Title I department. You may contact either of the following specialists for help at any stage of your planning process.

Plans should be sent electronically to:

Mary-Ann Simon, Title I School Improvement

E-mail: [mary-ann.simon@schools.utah.gov](mailto:mary-ann.simon@schools.utah.gov)

Or

Ann G. White, Title I School Improvement

E-mail: [ann.white@schools.utah.gov](mailto:ann.white@schools.utah.gov)

Plans should be sent via USPS with signatures to:

Utah State Office of Education  
Attention: Mary-Ann Simon and Ann G. White  
250 E. 500 S.  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

In accordance with state and federal law, plans are due by November 15, 2007.